

HISTORIC AREA PRESERVATION PLAN - 33

THE MERIDIAN STREET METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
(a.k.a Indiana Business College)
802 N. Meridian Street
Indianapolis, Indiana

HA-33 (MSC)

THE MARION COUNTY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN
Segment No. 33

A part of
The Comprehensive Plan for Marion County

Prepared By:
The Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana

Assisted by:
Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, Inc.

March 2006

Recommended by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission
March 1, 2006

Officially adopted by the Metropolitan Development Commission
April 5, 2006

MERIDIAN STREET METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
(a.k.a. Indiana Business College)
Historic Area Preservation Plan

I. OWNER¹

Indiana Equity Associates, Inc.
17927 Racebrook Court
Noblesville IN 46062
(317) 294-9416

II. HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN ANALYSIS

Construction Information

- Date of original design, construction, or origin: Church – 1905
- Architect/Designer/Builder: D.A. Bohlen and Son – Architect

Physical Description

The Meridian Street Methodist Episcopal Church is a 3-story 31,500 sq. ft. structure built in the Gothic Revival style. The church has load-bearing Indiana limestone walls with steel girders that support a wood joist floor system. The steeply pitched cross-gabled roof was historically covered by red clay tile laid in a “mission” pattern, which was removed and later covered with a contemporary asphalt shingle roofing system.² Two 8-sided turrets flank the front façade. Tall steeples originally rose from these twin towers, but the clay-tile covered steeples were removed c.1950. Defining Gothic Revival architectural features include the church’s many pointed-arch (lancet) windows, including quatrefoil, decorative window tracery, and the pointed “battlements” atop the twin towers. Many of the original stained glass windows were removed, although much of the framing and tracery still exists, and the window openings were infilled with a solid material.

III. LEGAL DESCRIPTION

The subject property is comprised of only one parcel of land known as “the historic area,” which includes only one structure known as “the historic church building.” The property is part of Lot 6 in Out Lot 171 of the Donation Lands of the City of Indianapolis, described as follows:

Beginning at the Southeast corner of said Lot 6, and being the Northwest corner of St. Clair and Meridian Streets, as now located thence North along the East line of said Lot 80 feet; thence West 205 feet to an alley called Superior Street; thence South along said alley 80 feet to St. Clair Street, as now located; thence East along St. Clair Street 205 feet to the place of beginning.

¹ From the records of the Center Township Assessor’s Office on December 1, 2005.

² Richardson, Munson & Weir; Lynch, Harrison and Brumleve; and Shepherd Engineering Services, A Feasibility Study Considering Part I: Converting the existing Indiana Business College Located at 802 N. Meridian St. Indianapolis, Indiana into The Lutheran Center; Part II: Updated Cost Estimate From a 1988 Building Study (Done by others) For the First Lutheran Church Indianapolis, Indiana (Indianapolis: by the authors, 6), 12 June 2001.

IV. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significance

The Meridian Street Methodist Episcopal Church is architecturally and culturally significant to the City of Indianapolis. Throughout its history, it served as both a religious and educational institution, and has provided the citizens of Marion County with a space to worship and a place to learn. The Gothic Revival structure was designed by one of Indianapolis' most prominent architectural firms, and it provided a house of worship for one of Indianapolis' oldest Methodist congregations.

Architectural Significance

The Meridian Street Methodist Episcopal Church is a 3-story 31,500 sq. ft. Gothic Revival building constructed during the years of 1905-06. The prominent Indianapolis architectural firm of D.A. Bohlen and Son designed the building,³ and Indiana limestone was chosen as the primary building material. The Bohlen firm was one of Indianapolis' leading architectural firms at the turn of the 20th century and specialized in church and institutional buildings throughout the Midwest. D.A. Bohlen and Son designed such notable structures as Indianapolis' City Market and Tomlinson Hall (1886), the Majestic Building (1896), the Murat Temple (1910), and the façade of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral (1936).⁴

The church retains much of its original building materials, as well as a relatively intact floor plan. The original sanctuary had been compromised by modern improvements, namely the installation of office rooms and a suspended acoustical tile ceiling that has since been removed. Inside the former sanctuary space, the rib vaulting, plaster, balcony and window trceries remain intact, albeit in varying degrees of disrepair. The exterior architectural detail is still intact with the exception of the stained glass windows that were replaced with smaller commercial window systems (and the openings previously occupied by sanctuary windows having been covered with a solid material), and the two steeples that were removed from the twin turrets upon purchase by the Indiana Business College.

The Indiana State Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology believes the building would qualify for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.⁵ The building is rated 'Notable' in the Marion County, Center Township Survey of Historic Sites and Structures, meaning that the building has "above average importance" with regard to its historic significance.⁶

Historical Significance

Around 1905, the congregation of the Meridian Street Methodist Episcopal Church, which was one of the oldest Methodist congregations in the city, made the decision to build at the northwest corner of Meridian and St. Clair streets after their existing church at Meridian and

³ *The Center Township, Marion County Interim Report*, Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory (Indianapolis: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1991), 16.

⁴ William Selin, "Diedrich August Bohlen," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 333-334.

⁵ January 13, 2006 letter from Paul C. Diebold, Senior Architectural Historian, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology.

⁶ *The Center Township, Marion County Interim Report*, 16.

New York streets was destroyed by fire. The church board held a special meeting in April 1905 during which H.P. Wasson moved that the plans prepared by the firm of D.A. Bohlen and Son be approved. The corner stone was laid on November 30, 1905, and the official dedication took place on December 9, 1906. The total cost of construction and furnishings was \$165,000. The existing structure served the Meridian Street Methodist Episcopal congregation until after WWII, when the congregation merged with the 51st St. and Hall Place Methodist Churches. The “farewell” service was held in December 1947.⁷ Around 1950, the church was acquired by the Indiana Business College, a post-secondary educational institution, and adapted to serve an educational use. Indiana Business College continued to own and occupy the building until January 2003, when the institution relocated to its current location at 550 E. Washington St.⁸ In late 2002, the building was sold to a local entrepreneur, Jerry Smith, who planned to lease the building to local artists and non-profits groups, although the plan never came to fruition. Smith then sold the building to its current owner.⁹ The building has been vacant since 2003, when Indiana Business College relocated.

V. PRESERVATION OBJECTIVES

1. To accommodate new development on the site in a manner that retains and preserves the exterior features of the historic church building that most directly affect three surrounding and significant historic resources:
 - The Meridian Street Corridor
 - The American Legion Mall
 - The Central Library
2. To assure that new development on the site is visually compatible with the historic church building and that internal conversion to a new use will have minimal affect on the exterior of the remaining historic church building.
3. To accommodate the specific “Development Plan” identified in section VI of this plan, if it is implemented, and to provide long-term protection for the remaining historic structure.
4. To provide a mechanism for protecting the historic church structure and assuring appropriate new development, if the Development Plan identified in section VI is not implemented.

⁷ Brubaker, 2.

⁸ “Breaking Campus: Business College to Auction Historic Building and Relocate,” *The Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis), 1 July 2002, accessed from <http://www.indystar.com/article.php?school01.html.business>.

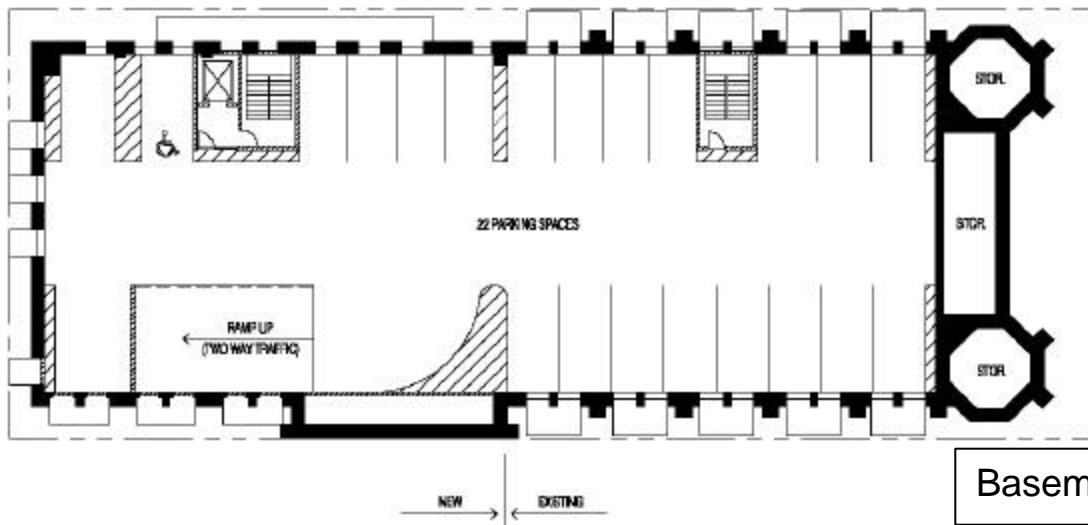
⁹ “Downtown Landmark Could Be Demolished,” *IBJ Daily* (Indianapolis), 30 November 2005, accessed from http://64.255.242.145/ibjdaily/html/daily_story_113005.html.

VI. THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

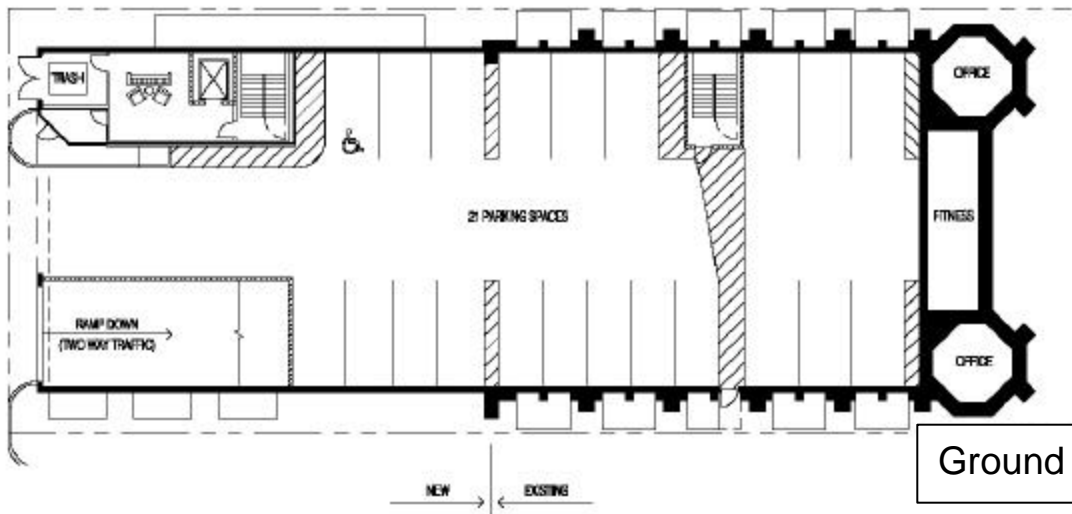
The “Development Plan” referenced in this Preservation Plan shall be as depicted in the drawings in this section. It is understood that details may change, but to be considered in conformance with the Development Plan, any action on the site shall be judged for similarity to the concepts depicted in these drawings. Basic footprint, scale, mass, form and general architectural appearance shall be substantially unchanged to be considered in conformance.

Note: The interior plans are included for information only. The final layout, finishes, materials and all other aspects of the interior (unless they directly effect the exterior) are exempt from the IHPC’s jurisdiction. Changes to the interior plan, which do not effect the exterior, do not constitute changes in the Development Plan.

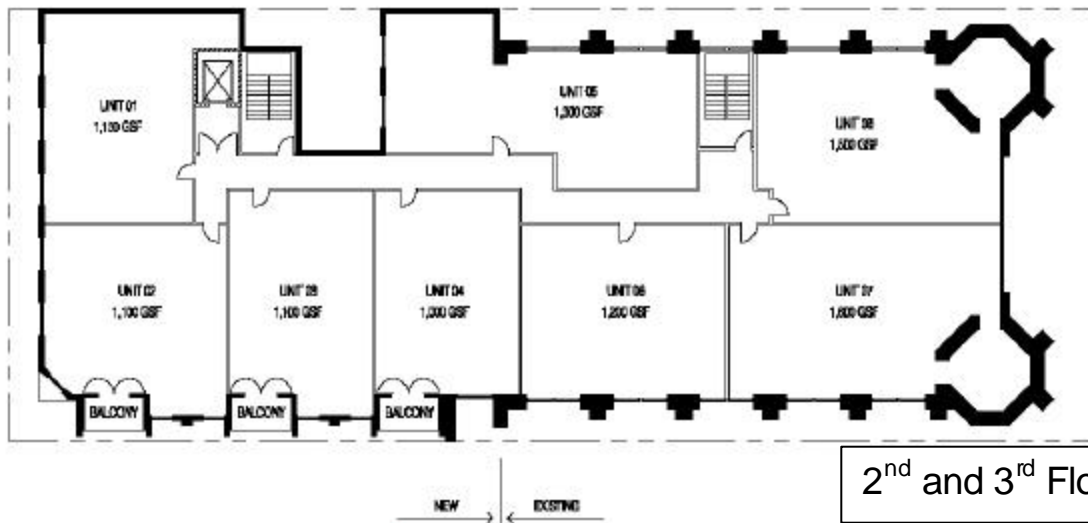




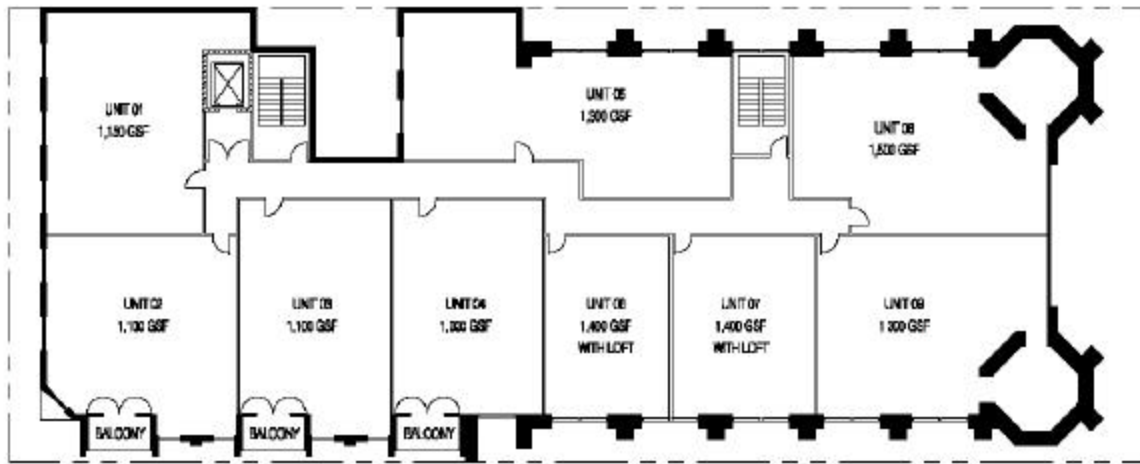
Basement



Ground Floor

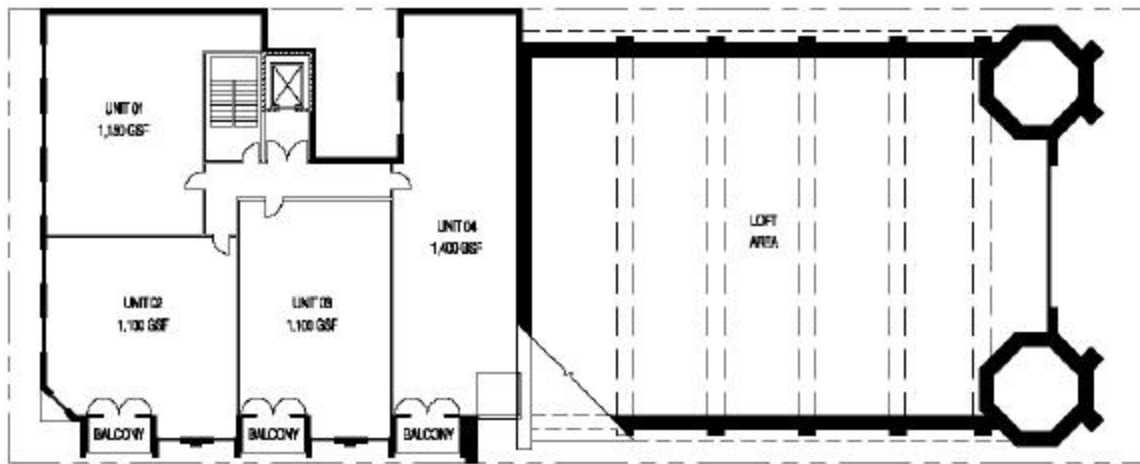


2nd and 3rd Floors



NEW → ← EXISTING

4th Floor



NEW → ← EXISTING

5th Floor

VII. CRITERIA FOR THE PRESERVATION, RESTORATION, REHABILITATION OR DEVELOPMENT

The IHPC shall use the Architectural and Design Standards in Section VII of the Wholesale District Historic Area Plan HA-23 (WD) when it reviews and makes decisions regarding alterations, new construction, reconstruction and demolition.

VIII. SUBJECT TO REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Zoning

A certificate of appropriateness must be granted by the IHPC before any zoning body may consider any petitions that affects the zoning of this property including, but not limited to: re-zoning, variances of development standards, variances of use, special exceptions, or modifications of commitments.

Construction, Reconstruction, Alteration, Demolition

Only the following specific actions require that a certificate of appropriateness be granted before installation or work begins:

1. New Construction. Construction of any new building or new addition in the Historic Area.
2. Demolition. Demolition or removal of any exterior portion of the historic church structure.
3. Restoration/Alteration of Historic Church Building. The alteration, addition, removal, or restoration of any feature on the exterior of the historic church structure, defined as:
 - Roof shape, roofing materials gutters and downspouts.
 - Exterior walls and towers.
 - Window and door openings.
 - Fixed or operating windows, skylights and doors (including glass).
 - Wood, stone and plaster trim and applied details.
 - Light fixtures and mechanical equipment.
 - Exterior steps, sidewalks, and railings.
 - Painting any surface on the exterior of the historic church building.
 - Cleaning the surface of any masonry, brick or cement using any method, including but not limited to: water pressure, chemicals, sandblasting or abrasive treatment.
4. Alteration of the New Addition. Any alteration to the new addition that requires a structural permit from the City of Indianapolis.
5. Signage. Installation of any exterior signage anywhere in the historic area.

IX. EXEMPT FROM REVIEW AND APPROVAL

1. Any construction, reconstruction, alteration, and demolition of any structure or exterior feature of a structure in the historic area that is not specifically described above as subject to review and approval is exempt from the requirement that a certificate of appropriateness be granted.
2. In no event shall any interior alteration be subject to the requirements that a certificate of appropriateness be granted.

X. SPECIAL REVIEW POLICIES

The following policies shall apply only within the 802 N. Meridian St. Historic Area and only when they conflict with other established policies of the IHPC.

1. Demolition. A COA for demolition of any portion of the historic church structure may be granted by staff without public hearing if it is in conformance with, and required to implement the Development Plan in section VI. Any other demolition requests can only be granted by the commission in accordance with its rules for public hearings.
2. New Construction. A COA for the construction of the new addition to the remaining historic church structure may be granted by staff without a public hearing if it is substantially similar in mass, scale and detail to its depiction in this plan.

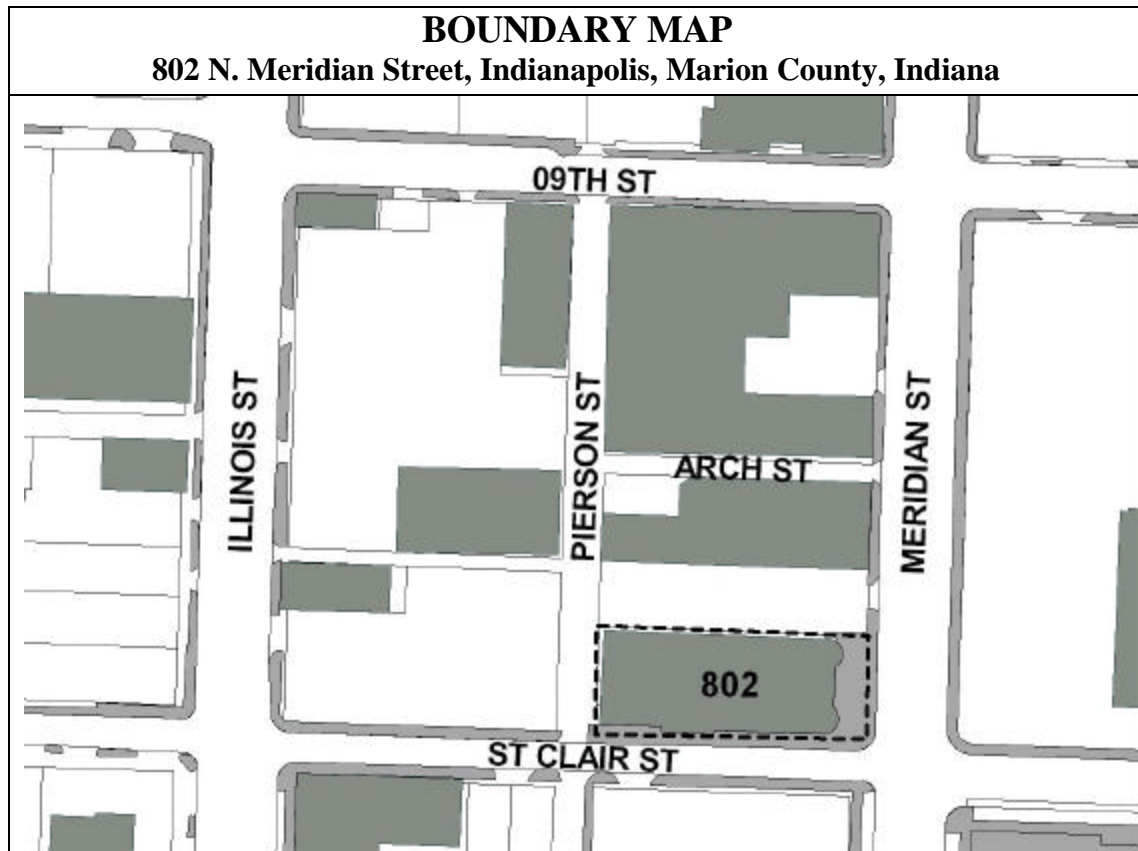
Notes:

The review process for all other COA requests shall conform with the IHPC policies in effect at the time of the request. These include:

1. any zoning and variance petitions at any time, and
2. any COA applications for requests that are not in conformance with the Development Plan, and
3. any and all COA applications for requests that occur after the Development Plan has been substantially completed (defined as earliest date that any unit is occupied.)

XI. IDENTIFICATION AND DESIGNATION OF HISTORIC AREA

The property at 802 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana is hereby identified and designated as an Indianapolis Historic Landmark.



Current Photograph
Nov. 2005
(photo by IHPC staff)



Historic Photograph - 1925
*(photo courtesy of the Bass Photo
Collection – Indiana Historical Society)*

